

We're going to need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:21 p.m. at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jerome Bettis, running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League.

### **Remarks in a Discussion on the PATRIOT Act in Buffalo, New York**

*April 20, 2004*

**The President.** Thanks for coming. I think you're going to find this to be a really interesting discussion about how Federal, State, and local authorities are working hard to prevent a terrorist attack. That's what we're here to talk about—and why it's important for those of us in positions of authority to give Federal, State, and local authorities all the tools necessary to do the job we expect of them. That's what we're here to talk about, but I've got some things I want to say before we start talking about it.

First, I am glad to be at the home of the mighty Buffalo Bills. I traveled today with Congressman Quinn and Congressman Reynolds, two fine Members of the United States Congress from this area, who assured me this is the year. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Jack and Tom for coming today. Thank you for your strong leadership. Thanks for caring a lot about the people of the Buffalo, New York, area. Thanks for your steadfast concern about the security of our country. I appreciate your service.

I also appreciate the service of the really fine Governor of the State of New York, George Pataki. Thanks for coming.

I know we've got State and local authorities who are here. I appreciate your service. For the local authorities, my only advice is make sure you fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—empty the garbage—[*laughter*]—answer the phone calls. But thanks for coming today.

This message today is aimed as much at you as it is anybody else.

Today we have got an interesting—a lot of families with us, but one that struck me as worthy of note, and that's the Conroy family. Where's Peggy Conroy? Somewhere. There she is. Good. Hi, Peggy. Thanks. The reason I brought up Peggy is, I want you to know that Peggy's husband is a staff sergeant in the National Guard, the 105th Military Police Unit in Karbala, Iraq. She represents many of the families of this area and the country who are sacrificing to see to it that the world is more free and more peaceful.

I appreciate so very much your steadfast love for your husband. You honor us with your presence today, and I'm really glad you brought Billy and Jeff and Tyler. Billy and Jeff really represent the greatest spirit of our country. Not only do they love their dad and pray for their dad, but they're collecting school supplies for the Iraqi children. In other words, they're going to their own schoolmates and saying, "How best can we not only help secure Iraq so it can become a free country, how best can we show the compassion of America?" And I want to thank you guys for honoring your dad and honoring our country.

I also met a fellow named Frank Brusino. Where are you, Frank? There he is. Frank is an interesting character. [*Laughter*] He is a retired brigadier general in the Army Reserves, a paratrooper, who is now very much involved with the Senior Corps, the Citizen Corps Council. In other words, their job is to help provide law enforcement with additional volunteers so law enforcement can better do its job. For the first-responders who are here, I think you know the valuable addition that Citizen Corps Councils have made, so you can do your work better.

The reason I bring up Frank is, you know, a lot of times they talk about the strength of America as being in our military. That's part of our strength, and we're going to keep the military strong, by the way, so the world will be more peaceful. They talk about the strength of our country being the fact that we're a prosperous nation, and we need to make sure we continue to expand prosperity so people can find work. But the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and

souls of our citizens. See, Frank represents the strength of America because he volunteers to make the community in which he lives a better place. He sets such a great example for other citizens in this area. That's why I wanted to herald Frank's accomplishments. He is a soldier in the army of compassion. He takes time out of his life to see what he can do to make the Buffalo area more secure.

My call to people in this area is, see what you can do to make Buffalo a more compassionate, decent place. See, societies change one conscience, one soul a time. All it takes is for citizens to hear that universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and mentor a child or feed the hungry or provide shelter for the homeless or love the lonely. And by doing so, you serve our Nation, and you really show the world the true compassion of a great nation.

Thank you for your service, sir. I'm proud that you're here. Thanks for coming.

September the 11th was a horrible day for our Nation, and we must never forget the lessons of September the 11th. I appreciate so very much the Governor's steadfast determination and compassion during those difficult times for the citizens of New York City and New York State and New Jersey and Connecticut. It's a time that really changed our perspective about the world. See, we never really thought America would be a battlefield. We thought oceans would protect us. That was kind of the conventional wisdom of the time, and therefore, our defenses were aligned that way, our offenses were aligned that way.

As Larry mentioned, there were threats, but most of those threats were overseas, and they attacked us overseas. But never did we dream that they would use our own airplanes as weapons to fly and mercilessly kill thousands of our citizens. From that day forward, we have changed our attitude, and we've got to make sure the laws reflect the realities of the generation—of the new generation, of the generation of those of us involved with being responsible for the security of the country.

See, we're now facing the first war of the 21st century. It's a different kind of war. Frank was a paratrooper. In those days you

could measure the enemy by the number of battalions and number of tanks and number of airplanes. Now the enemy hides in caves. They lurk<sup>\*</sup> in the shadows of the world. They will strike and kill innocent citizens without any conscience, because they have no conscience.

So the fundamental charge before us all in positions of responsibility is, how do we deal with the threat? First thing we do is we stay on the offense. First thing we do is we find killers before they kill us. We rally the world, which we have done and will continue to do, to cut off money, to share intelligence, to put brave troops and security personnel after these people, to find them, to rout them out. The message should be clear to them, there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from the justice of the United States of America and our coalition partners. It's essential.

September the 11th—when the President says something, he better mean it. See, in order to make the world more peaceful, it's essential that those of us in positions of high responsibility speak clearly and mean what we say. And so when I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist," I meant it. And we acted upon that, in order to make the world more peaceful and more secure.

The Taliban found out what we meant. Remember, those were the leaders in Afghanistan that provided safe haven and training camps for Al Qaida. And fortunately, thanks to our coalition, thanks to brave soldiers from America and others, the Taliban no longer is in power. We enforced the doctrine. The world is more peaceful because the Taliban is gone. And at the same time, please remember, the women and children in Afghanistan have a much brighter future because we removed a barbaric regime that refused to even educate young girls.

When the President speaks, he better mean it. When I went in front of the United Nations Security Council in the fall of 2002, I said, "Listen, we all have seen a threat. One of the lessons of September the 11th was when you see a threat overseas, you must act before it materializes. September the

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<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.

11th said we can't wait and hope on the good intentions of terrorists who will kill innocent men and women. We've got to act. We can't hope for the best anymore." The United States must use our prestige and influence and diplomatic power and military power to protect us and others who love freedom.

I went in front of the United Nations Security Council, having looked at intelligence that said Saddam Hussein was a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, by the way, and concluded Saddam was a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence and said Saddam was a threat. No wonder we thought he was a threat. After all, he had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Not only did the intelligence lead us to believe that, but his actions led us to believe it. He paid for suiciders. He harbored terrorists. He was paying for terrorists to kill. And so we saw a threat.

September the 11th changed the equation. So I was given a choice: Either trust the word of a madman, hope for the best with somebody who was a tyrant, or take action to defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

It's hard work to go from a system where there was torture and rape rooms and mass graves to freedom. That's hard work, but it is necessary work. That's why I want to herald the work and sacrifice of your husband. It's important work for our future. Free societies are peaceful societies. The way to defeat terror in the long run is to provide hope, to provide hope for families, to provide hope for children, to say there is a bright future for you. That won't happen so long as there's tyranny in a part of the world that tends to breed hatred. It will happen when societies become democratic and free.

And so what we're doing right now is we're defeating the enemy there so we won't have to fight them here. But as well, we're working for freedom in the heart of a part of the world that needs freedom. You know, I can't tell you how strongly I believe that—about the power of freedom. After all, it's been a part of our national soul. We have proven how powerful freedom can be. We bring people from diverse backgrounds together under the mantle of a free society. We're such a beacon.

I believe freedom is not America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And therefore, as we work to not only make the homeland more secure, we work to spread freedom, which will make the world more peaceful. The enemy can't stand the thought of free societies. That's why they attacked us, see, and we're not going to change. That's what they don't understand. There's nothing they can do to intimidate us, to make us change our deepest belief.

They're trying to kill to shake our will. We're too tough, too strong, too resolute, and too determined to ever have our will shaken by thugs and terrorists.

We live in historic times. We face a different kind of war, and one of the key victories in this battle against terror is going to be the spread of freedom throughout the greater Middle East. And we'll succeed. We'll succeed because deep in the heart of every human being is the deep desire to be free.

At home, we've got a lot of work to do. We've got a lot of work to do. We're a free nation. We're a big nation. People come and go. And we needed to change the whole attitude about how we protect the homeland. We'll do everything we can to stay on the offensive. But just remember, we've got to be right 100 percent of the time, and the enemy has only got to be right once. And so we've got a tough job.

It means we've got to coordinate between the Federal Government and the State Government and the local government like never before. We've got to share information on a real-time basis so first-responders and police chiefs can move as quickly as possible. We're going to talk about that communication today.

We created the Department of Homeland Security which would allow us to better coordinate between agencies. It's kind of—what happens in bureaucracies is you get what they call stovepipes—in other words, people don't talk to each other, they kind of stay in their own lane, and they don't share information across the lanes. And therefore, vital information may show up, but it's not widely disseminated, so there's not real-time action on, say, a threat.

Part of the problem we faced was that there was laws and bureaucratic mindsets that prevented the sharing of information. And so, besides setting up the Homeland Security Department and beefing up our air travel security and making sure that we now fingerprint at the borders and take those fingerprints, by the way, and compare them to a master log of fingerprints of terrorists and known criminals, to make sure people coming into our country are the right people coming into our country. I mean, we're doing a lot of things. But we changed law as well to allow the FBI and—to be able to share information within the FBI.

Incredibly enough, because of—which Larry and others will describe—see, I'm not a lawyer, so it's kind of hard for me to kind of get bogged down in the law. I'm not going to play like one, either. [Laughter] The way I viewed it, if I can just put it in simple terms, is that one part of the FBI couldn't tell the other part of the FBI vital information because of law. And the CIA and the FBI couldn't talk. Now, these are people charged with gathering information about threats to the country, yet they couldn't share the information.

And right after September the 11th, the Congress wisely acted, said, "This doesn't make any sense. If we can't get people talking, how can we act? We're charged with the security of the country, first-responders are charged with the security of the country, and if we can't share information between vital agencies, we're not going to be able to do our job." And they acted.

So the first thing I want you to think about is, when you hear PATRIOT Act, is that we changed the law and bureaucratic mindset to allow for the sharing of information. It's vital, and others will describe what that means.

Secondly, there are such things as roving wiretaps. Now, by the way, any time you hear the United States Government talking about wiretap, it requires—a wiretap requires a court order. Nothing has changed, by the way. When we're talking about chasing down terrorists, we're talking about getting a court order before we do so. It's important for our fellow citizens to understand, when you think PATRIOT Act, constitutional guarantees are

in place when it comes to doing what is necessary to protect our homeland, because we value the Constitution.

But a roving wiretap means—it was primarily used for drug lords. A guy, a pretty intelligent drug lord would have a phone, and in old days they could just get a tap on that phone. So guess what he'd do? He'd get him another phone, particularly with the advent of the cell phones. And so he'd start changing cell phones, which made it hard for our DEA types to listen, to run down these guys polluting our streets, and that changed. The law changed on—roving wiretaps were available for chasing down drug lords. They weren't available for chasing down terrorists, see? That didn't make any sense in the post-9/11 era. If we couldn't use a tool that we're using against mobsters on terrorists, something needed to happen.

The PATRIOT Act changed that. So with court order, law enforcement officials can now use what's called roving wiretaps, which will prevent a terrorist from switching cell phones in order to get a message out to one of his buddies.

Thirdly, to give you an example of what we're talking about, there's something called delayed notification warrants. Those are very important. I see some people, first-responders, nodding their heads about what they mean. These are a common tool used to catch mobsters. In other words, it allows people to collect data before everybody is aware of what's going on. It requires court order. It requires protection under the law. We couldn't use these against terrorists, but we could use against gangs.

We had real problems chasing paper—following paper trails of people. The law was just such that we could run down a problem for a crooked businessman. We couldn't use the same tools necessary to chase down a terrorist. That doesn't make any sense, and sometimes the use of paper trails and paper will lead local first-responders and local officials to a potential terrorist. We've got to have every tool, is what I'm telling you, available for our people who I expect to do their jobs and you expect to do their jobs.

We had tough penalties for drug traffickers. We didn't have as tough a penalty for terrorists. That didn't make any sense.

The true threat to the 21st century is the fact somebody is trying to come back into our country and hurt us. And we ought to be able to at least send a signal through law that says we're going to treat you equally as tough as we do mobsters and drug lords.

There's other things we need to do. We need administrative subpoenas in the law. This was not a part of the recent PATRIOT Act. By the way, the reason I bring up the PATRIOT Act, it's set to expire next year. I'm starting a campaign to make it clear to Members of Congress, it shouldn't expire. It shouldn't expire, for the security of our country.

Administrative subpoenas means it is—speeds up the process whereby people can gain information to go after terrorists. Administrative subpoenas I guess is kind of an ominous-sounding word, but it is, to put everybody's mind at ease about administrative subpoenas—we use them to catch crooked doctors today. It's a tool for people to chase down medical fraud. And it certainly seems to make sense to me that if we're using it as a tool to chase medical fraud cases, we certainly ought to use it as a tool to chase potential terrorists.

I'll tell you another interesting part of the law that needs to be changed. Judges need greater authority to deny bail to terrorists. Judges have that authority in many cases like—again, I keep citing drug offenses, but the Congress got tough on drug offenders a while ago and gave judges leeway to deny bail. They don't have that same authority to deny bail to terrorists now. I've got to tell you, it doesn't make any sense to me that it is very conceivable that we haul in somebody who is dangerous to America, and then they are able to spring bail, and out they go.

It's hard to assure the American people that we've given tools to law enforcement that they need if somebody has gone through all the work to chase down a potential terrorist, and they haul them in front of a court, and they pay bail, and it's *adios*. It just doesn't make any sense.

The PATRIOT Act needs to be renewed, and the PATRIOT Act needs to be enhanced. That's what we're talking about, and it's better for others to explain to you how this PATRIOT Act works. After all, they're

charged with protecting our citizens. They're on the frontline. You see, I try to pick the best I can at the Federal Government and say, "Here's our mission. Our mission is to protect our country." I say that to the Defense Department, "Our mission is to protect the country." I say it to the Justice Department and to the FBI. After 9/11, I said to the Justice Department and the FBI, "Your job, your primary focus now is to prevent attack. Listen, I still want you chasing down the criminals. That's what's expected of you. But there's a new mindset, and that is, because of what happened on 9/11, we've got to change the way we think, and therefore, your job now is to prevent attack."

And one of the first persons I told that to was Thompson. See, when they say "Deputy Attorney General," it means he's the number two guy at the Justice Department. He's the chief—he was the chief operating officer of the Justice Department. He was there when he heard the command given that we're at war. "I want everybody at home doing everything we can to protect us, and you're job now is to prevent. Do what you can do."

And so—Larry, we miss you over there, and don't get too comfortable. He's living in Atlanta. He's living in Atlanta, Georgia. Actually, when he left he said, "You know, I've got some kids to raise." I love that spirit, by the way. I love the fact that a dad puts his family first. And that's a vital part of life, isn't it? And so, he did a heck of a good job. He's also doing a very good job as his most important responsibility, which is being a loving dad.

But I appreciate you coming up. Why don't you just say what you want to say—now that you're no longer in Government. [Laughter]

[Larry Thompson, former Deputy Attorney General of the United States, made brief remarks and introduced Michael Battle, U.S. Attorney, Western District of New York, who also made brief remarks.]

**The President.** Let me stop you right there. I hope the average citizen sees the dilemma. You've got people working on the criminal case, moving along, and they say, "We've got a problem with these guys." And

all of a sudden, the other side of the building says, "They may be involved with a plot related to terrorism," and yet, they can't talk?

Go ahead. *[Laughter]* They could talk about Buffalo Bills football, but they couldn't talk about securing the homeland.

**Michael Battle.** I couldn't have said it better myself. *[Laughter]*

**The President.** Now, let me ask you something, Mike. First of all, congratulations.

**Mr. Battle.** Thank you.

**The President.** We put you in there because we want you to get them and lock them up if they're harmful to America. *[Laughter]* But let me ask you something; talk about the—you did a good job. We're about to go to Pete Ahearn of the FBI, but I want to ask you a question on the bail proceedings. Do you have any thoughts—it's kind of a leading question, of course—*[laughter]*—I'm not even a lawyer. Anyway—*[laughter]*—tell me about the bail proceedings with those that you arrested.

*[Mr. Battle made further remarks.]*

**The President.** I appreciate you, Mike. Good job.

**Mr. Battle.** Thank you, Mr. President.

**The President.** Pete Ahearn is with us, with the FBI. Pete, why don't you share with us what it was like not to talk to somebody? No. *[Laughter]*

Let me say something about the FBI. Pete's boss is Bob Mueller. He's now the Director of the FBI. Mueller is doing a fabulous job. He is a—he comes to my office nearly every morning. He sits down and brings me up to date on what the FBI is doing. What's really interesting is to follow some of the cases—we followed this case—to see how hard our agents are working, how close the coordination is. And I really want to thank you for being on the frontline of doing really incredibly important work to protect the American people.

**Peter Ahearn.** It's an honor, Mr. President. Thank you. First off, Mr. President, people have to realize—and it's not just with the FBI or our Joint Terrorism Task Force but so many in this room have sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution of this country. The PATRIOT Act is a law. The PATRIOT Act has the judicial oversight. The

rules are there. We follow the rules. The last time I checked, the terrorists don't have the rules that we have and don't have to play by them.

So when you're dealing with a situation like this and you have all the pieces of the puzzle and parts of the puzzle in one room, parts in another—we were, at the time, probably one of the first FBI offices applying the new PATRIOT Act during the outset of this investigation.

The other issue, the information that we received—and it wasn't just issues with the six individuals in Lackawanna; it was the information we were able to glean that we were able to pass to our counterparts, for example in the CIA. It's just not—it did not just deal with here. It was incumbent on us to take that information and everything we had, not just maybe some phone numbers that we got from the criminal side of the case or phone numbers that we got from the intelligence side of the case.

Even after the Lackawanna case, the PATRIOT Act provisions helped us. We were able to share the intelligence from the prof-fers intelligence from the grand jury, the information that we had there and pass it to the intel community that led to many other things that were part of this investigation that were overseas. So it was not just the cell right here—

**The President.** Right. Some of the people in the cell here actually were traveling overseas, as I recall. As a matter of fact, we got a couple of them overseas, isn't that right?

**Agent Ahearn.** Yes, sir. Yes, we did.

**The President.** Maybe I'm not supposed to say that. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Battle.** As far as I'm concerned, Mr. President—

**The President.** Thank you, Attorney. *[Laughter]* He said I didn't break any rules. *[Laughter]*

The point is, is that—what he's telling you is, is that we needed to share this information throughout our Government, which we couldn't do before. And it just doesn't make any sense. We got people working hard overseas that are collecting information to better help us protect ourselves. And what 9/11 was, is that—said is that a threat overseas now must be taken seriously here at home. It's

one thing to protect our Embassies, and we work hard to do so. But now a threat overseas could end up being a threat to the homeland. And in order to protect the homeland, these good people have got to be able to share information.

Those who criticize the PATRIOT Act must listen to those folks on the frontline of defending America. The PATRIOT Act defends our liberty, is what it does, under the Constitution of the United States.

**Agent Ahearn.** Prior to the PATRIOT Act, it is true, and no pun intended, but we were fighting with one arm tied behind our back. It was clear. *[Laughter]*

**The President.** Yes, it looks like you still are. *[Laughter]*

*[Agent Ahearn made further remarks.]*

**The President.** Joint Terrorism Task Force—you might tell the folks what that means.

**Agent Ahearn.** Well, clearly, the JTTF is an acronym, obviously, for the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Prior to 9/11 there were about 28 of them in the United States. We, here in Buffalo, had already established and put the paperwork in for one prior to 9/11. It was the first one approved. And it brings to the table more resources that I can, as the FBI Director here—to put into the battle in the war on terrorism.

**The President.** And who sits around the table—Joint Terrorism Task Force? FBI agents, U.S. attorneys, local?

**Agent Ahearn.** I'm sure you're going to hear more about that with the gentlemen here, but they all sit around and—

**The President.** Okay, good. That's what I'm leading into. See, it's kind of a—

**Agent Ahearn.** No, it was a good segue. *[Laughter]* There are no secrets. I mean, everybody that is cleared and is part of the investigation, they see it all.

**The President.** Right. This is a good segue, as we say, to Federal, State, and local cooperation. It is—in order for us to do our jobs, we've got to make sure that the Federal Government shares information with the State Government, and vice versa, and that the State and Federal Government share information with the local government, vice versa. So that everybody is knitted up, as we

say. And that wasn't the case before September the 11th in a lot of communities.

One of the knitter-uppers is Jim McMahon, who was appointed by the Governor. I appreciate your service. Let her go.

*[James McMahon, Director, Office of Public Security, State of New York, made brief remarks.]*

**The President.** I appreciate that. What dawned on me when Jim was talking is that we do the same thing, by the way, for Federal emergency response. We've done a better job of coordinating FEMA, for example, which is—means Federal Emergency Management Association. But it's now part of the Homeland Security Department. And we better coordinate with State and local authorities. So not only are we doing—coordinating activities when it comes to fighting terrorists, but we're doing so when it comes to responding to emergencies as well.

I appreciate the first-responders who are here. I know New York has got fantastic first-responders. Obviously, those who rushed into burning towers set the highest of high standards for courage and bravery and really serve as great inspiration for others who wear the uniform as well as those of us who appreciate those who wear the uniform.

Speaking about wearing a uniform, one man wore one today, and that would be Chief Moslow. Thank you for coming, sir. We're honored you're here.

*[John Moslow, chief of police, Amherst, New York, made brief remarks.]*

**The President.** Yes, that's good. See, Thompson whispered, he said, "We've only got 13,000 FBI agents." That is—when you think about it—across the country, that's not a lot of FBI agents, is it? So, therefore, there needs to be cooperation.

I appreciate you, Chief. You represent those on the frontline, what we call the first-responders. The Federal Government is spending some money to help. The key is to make sure we get it to you so it doesn't get stuck in different bureaucracies, which is one of the challenges those of us in Government face, which is not getting stuck in bureaucracies. But I want to thank you, and I want to thank the men and women from

this area who are on the frontlines, for doing everything in your power to uphold the oath to which you swore when you became a uniformed officer.

Here's what I think. I think that the world is going to be more peaceful and free. I think America is now more secure, and we're working to make it even more secure. There is no doubt in my mind that this country can<sup>\*</sup> achieve any objective we put our mind to. It's essential we remain steadfast and strong and courageous and determined. History has called us to this moment of time, and history has called the right nation to lead. And the reason I can say that with certainty is because I understand the character and the courage of the American people.

It's an honor to have been here today. I hope, as a result of this discussion, our fellow citizens have a better understanding of the importance of the PATRIOT Act and why it needs to be renewed and expanded—the importance of the PATRIOT Act when it comes to defending America, our liberties, and at the same time, that it still protects our liberties under the Constitution.

But more importantly, I hope our fellow citizens recognize that there are hundreds of their fellow citizens working on a daily basis to do their duty to make this country as secure as possible. And for your work, I say thank you, and may God continue to bless you.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:49 a.m. at the Kleinshans Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Peter Ahearn, special agent in charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Buffalo, NY.

### Remarks at a Victory 2004 Luncheon in New York City

April 20, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you. Please be seated. The faster I speak, the quicker you eat. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. Thanks for the support of voter turnout efforts. I look forward to carrying the banner. I look for-

ward to explaining what I intend to do for the next 4 years, and your help will make it easier for us to get people to the polls. That's really what we're doing here today, and I want to thank you for that.

I appreciate my friend Pataki, who is doing a great job as the Governor of this great State. If you think the President is being hard, try being the Governor of New York—[laughter]—or the mayor of New York. Mayor, thank you for coming. I appreciate both the fine jobs you're doing. You both are great men. Thanks for your friendship. I'm proud to know you, as we say in Crawford, Texas.

Laura is not here, obviously, and so you drew the short straw. She is a fabulous woman who is a great First Lady. And I got to tell you, it's a lot easier to be President with somebody who is—sees the ability to influence people's lives in a positive way, just like Laura does. She is making a huge difference, whether it be literacy or women's health issues. The most important thing she means to me is steadfast love. And I'm proud of her, and I wish she were here today.

I know Peter King is here. I appreciate you coming, Congressman. I'm glad—appreciate your distinguished service in the mighty New York congressional delegation. Is Vito here as well? Hey, Vito. Good to see you. Thank you for coming. Vito Fossella as well is here—two Members of the Congress. They're here for two reasons: one, they like a good meal—[laughter]—two, they want a nice ride back to Washington. [Laughter] Maybe pick up a little wisdom, too, right, Peter?

I appreciate my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman. Mercer is a business guy out of Cincinnati, Ohio, and he said, "Can I help you?" I said, "You bet. Get to work." And he has. And I really want to thank Mercer for his leadership.

Al Hoffman is the RNC finance chairman from the great State of Florida. Thank you for being here, Al, and thank you for your help. See you Friday. I will be in Naples and Miami Friday. I want to thank Lew Eisenberg. I appreciate your leadership, Lew. Thanks for helping make sure this dinner went well today. Thank you very much.

<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.